

An architectural rose is a rose, and a toad remains a toad

Beauty, so they say, is in the eye of the beholder.

That is why this beholder decided to slip by Lansdowne Park and eye both the Cattle Castle and the Horticulture Building.

On the way, I also beheld the Daly Building.

Maybe I'd missed something.

After all, so many people seem enamored of these three buildings, maybe they warranted closer inspection.

Well, if I'd missed anything the other times I'd seen them, it's just how ugly and dilapidated they really are. Even restored — and no, they're not worth the money — they'd still be ugly.

A rose, by any other name, is still a rose. So too is a toad.

We are told the Daly Building is the only example around of Chicago architecture.

So what? Al Capone may have liked it, but that doesn't make it worth saving.

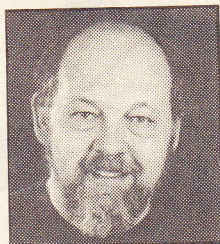
The hideous Cattle Castle, alas, has been saved (for the moment anyway) by a flip-flopping Ottawa Council. By the time they're finished restoring it, you can count on it costing much more than the \$11 million or \$12 million they're talking about now.

Then there's the Horticulture Building.

This newspaper, in an apparently serious editorial last week, waxed eloquently about this building and attacked "council's careless plunder."

We are told it is worth saving, and the councillors are fools for not recognizing this, because it is one of the few remaining designs by Canadian architect Francis Sullivan.

"It's painted over and boarded up now, but you can still feel the power in the strong, horizontal lines, see the dignified detailing in the symmetrical



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fretwork on the upper windows and imagine the openness if the oversized ground-floor windows were restored."

Are they serious? The place is a dump.

Granted, Ottawa designated it a heritage

building two years ago, and it is inconsistent to now decide to tear it down. But what's a little political inconsistency compared to spending untold millions to refurbish something that isn't needed and isn't worth saving even if it were?

Oh yes, the building is "a rare example of the Prairie school of architecture..."

Prairie architecture? What's that? Sod huts and grain elevators, both of which, incidentally, are just as attractive and far more useful than the Horticulture Building.

Cannings responsible

Heritage, of course, has been the central focus for the past three years for local market landlord Richard Cannings.

Cannings fought for all these buildings, with considerable impact.

He has quit as Heritage Ottawa president and will no doubt be a candidate for council in November.

He more than anyone has been responsible for the salvation of these hideous monuments to past excesses.

While he wears that as a badge of honor, voters left to pay the millions

of dollars needed to rehabilitate these places may have a different view.

Certainly, some things are worth preserving. But they must have some genuine historical or architectural value.

It makes no more sense to save buildings for the sake of saving them than it does to tear them down for the sake of tearing them down.

Oh yes, before we leave the subject, there's the campaign by the co-operative housing advocates to use Lansdowne Park for low-cost co-op housing.

Get serious. We certainly need more affordable housing, but it doesn't have to be on one of the most scenic and expensive pieces of real estate in town.

Meanwhile, back at the aforementioned *Citizen* editorial.

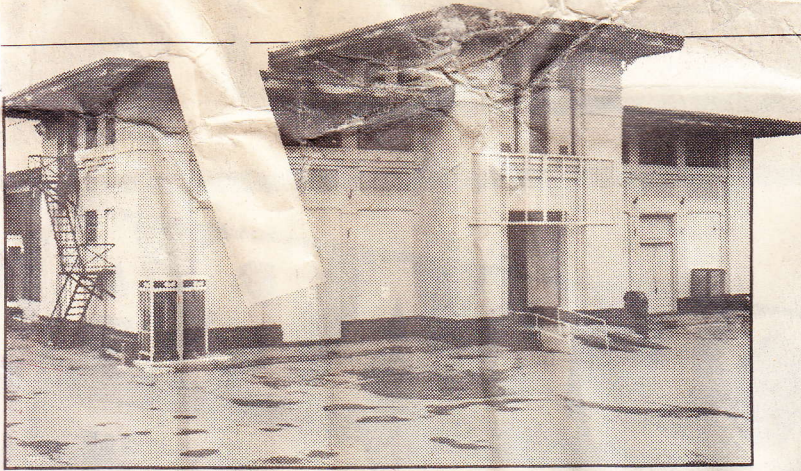
It ended by saying that the 16 councillors who voted against the Horticulture Building "should be marched to Lansdowne Park where they should be forced to swing the first sledge hammers into the thoughtfully designed building."

Could I join them? I'd love to. I really would.

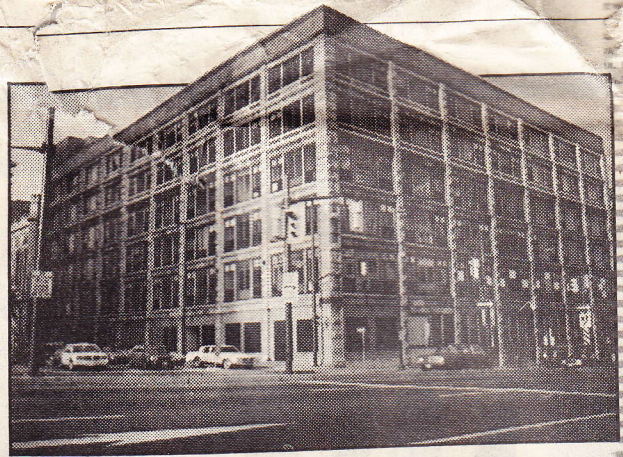
Better still, let's get a dozer and do it right.

I'll drive.

(Claire Hoy is an Ottawa freelance writer)



Horticulture Building was designed by Francis Sullivan



Daly Building is example of Chicago School



-Citizen photos

Cattle Castle at Lansdowne Park has been saved - for now